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ABSTRACT

This report discusses the development of a citizens' agenda for higher education in Illinois, presenting a set of initial goals and the reasoning behind them. It reviews the importance of higher education for a productive citizenry and the economic benefits of higher education. The report proposes eight goals that are designed to increase the educational attainment of Illinois citizens; extend access to higher education; assure that college is affordable; enhance access and success for members of underrepresented groups; improve the quality of education; enhance responsiveness to students, employers, communities, and the state; strengthen school-college partnerships; and improve productivity. It then discusses the implementation of the citizens' agenda, focusing on the need for the state to renew it's commitment to higher education. It notes that surveys of the general population, opinion leaders, university seniors, and employers will be used to inform the agenda. (MDM)

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Item #6A
July 7, 1998

ED 422 755

STATE OF ILLINOIS
BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

# EDUCATION FOR THE 21ST CENTURY: A CITIZENS' AGENDA FOR ILLINOIS HIGHER EDUCATION

## Executive Summary

This item begins the discussion of a citizens' agenda for Illinois higher education. During the coming months, the Board of Higher Education and its staff will consult with college and university administrators and trustees, advisory committees, leaders in business and industry, and many others to build consensus on strategic goals that will guide our response to the challenges and opportunities of the next decade. The Board will also conduct surveys of the general population, opinion leaders, university seniors, and employers to inform this agenda. As a starting point, the following goals are proposed:

- Increase the educational attainment of Illinois citizens
- Extend access to higher education
- Assure that college is affordable
- Enhance access and success for members of underrepresented groups
- Improve the quality of education
- Enhance responsiveness to students, employers, communities, and the state
- Strengthen school-college partnerships
- Improve productivity

Many of these goals are familiar and, indeed, they represent the fundamental goals of higher education everywhere. Yet they introduce new specific goals about educational attainment, responsiveness, and K-12 partnerships. The task ahead is to refine, revise, and further define these goals in light of the challenges and opportunities that the future will bring: technology, electronic commerce, globalization, and the changing needs and characteristics of our Illinois population. It also will be necessary over the months ahead to develop specific implementation strategies and qualitative and/or quantitative benchmarks which will permit periodic assessments as to the success we are having in achieving our goals.

When the surveys, consultations, and analyses have been completed and the Board has a clear sense of the strategic goals that it ought to adopt, it will define anew the public purposes of higher education in Illinois. The goals it establishes will be presented to the new governor of Illinois and to the General Assembly, and will guide the Board's decision-making, including budgeting, program review, and program approval, for many years to come.

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**Education for the 21st Century:**

**A Citizens' Agenda for Illinois Higher Education**

*We know what we have done and what we have said,*

*and how we have grown, degree by slow degree,*

*believing ourselves toward all we have tried to become-*

*just and compassionate, equal, able, and free.*

*All this is in the hands of children, eyes already set*

*on a land we never can visit—it isn't there yet—*

*but looking through their eyes, we can see*

*what our long gift to them may come to be.*

From "Of History and Hope"
By Miller Williams

## I. Introduction

Since it was established in 1961, the Board of Higher Education has used planning to address pressing issues—changes in the population, emerging programmatic needs, access, quality, affordability, cost-effectiveness—and to shape the character and purposes of Illinois higher education.

Policies of the Board of Higher Education have served the citizens of the state well and have contributed to the excellence of Illinois' outstanding colleges and universities. The Board was among the first in the nation to develop and implement a comprehensive policy on undergraduate education. Affordability policies have supported the development of one of the top two student aid programs in the country. The Priorities, Quality, and Productivity (PQP) initiative is recognized as a model to be emulated nationally. The PQP initiative has resulted in better alignment of state and institutional priorities, improved planning processes, and attention to previously overlooked issues because institutions have strengthened quality, enhanced distinctiveness, and improved responsiveness. The Priorities, Quality, and Productivity initiative resulted in expanded public confidence and support for higher education.

Illinois higher education is, then, well positioned to address challenges emerging at the state and national levels. We can build upon the past and adopt new goals and strategies on behalf of the citizens of the state, traditional and nontraditional students, parents, and those who engage our students in work or in further education upon their graduation. By streamlining regulatory processes, we can provide flexibility and foster entrepreneurial initiatives among Illinois institutions.

At its January 1998 meeting, the Board of Higher Education asked its staff to create for its review a new statewide plan for higher education. Recognizing emerging educational needs, shifts in the population and the economy, developing technologies, and changes within higher education, the Board decided that a plan for a new century, bringing new challenges and opportunities, was in order.

This paper is the first in a series that will culminate in a citizens' agenda for higher education in Illinois. This agenda will be a project in the making for several months as college and university trustees and administrators, student, faculty, and institutional advisory committees to the Board of Higher Education, representatives from business and industry, and many others are consulted on a formal and informal basis. In addition, the agenda will be informed by a statewide survey that will query citizens about their views on the public purposes of higher education. In this multi-layered process, the Board also will conduct focus groups, as well as survey the state's opinion leaders, graduating seniors, and those who employ the graduates of our institutions, public, private, and proprietary. As the strategic goals are developed and refined, benchmarks will be developed so that progress and success can be assessed. Further, specific implementation strategies will evolve as discussions proceed.

When the surveys, consultations, and analyses have been completed, the Board will define anew the public purposes of higher education in Illinois and call upon institutions, each according to its own traditions, mission and priorities, to contribute to the achievement of these goals. In this way, the Board hopes to provide leadership, direction, and oversight, while encouraging colleges and universities to be entrepreneurial and to exercise fully their autonomies and prerogatives. The goals it establishes will be presented to the new governor of Illinois and to the General Assembly, and will guide Board and staff decision-making, including budgeting, program review, and program approval, for many years to come.

## II. A Challenging New Environment for Higher Education in Illinois

Higher education benefits both individuals and society. Better-educated individuals have higher incomes and greater job security and mobility, and tend to contribute to their communities. They are more likely to vote, participate in civic activities, and contribute to charities. They pay higher taxes and, at the same time, exert fewer demands on public resources. In addition, higher education contributes to social and economic advancement in a wide range of areas—health care, agriculture, communications, urban renewal, and the arts.

For the first time in decades, higher education has the opportunity, indeed, the obligation, to significantly expand access, just as the Morrill Act, the GI Bill, and the community college movement did in the past. Technology enriches and expands learning opportunities for traditional students, recent high school graduates who live on campus and attend full time. Technology can also take quality instruction conveniently into homes and workplaces for teachers, engineers, health care professionals and others who regularly seek or require continuing professional development. Beyond that, technology holds the promise of extending education to previously unserved populations by eliminating the barriers of time and place. As workers need to assimilate more information to do their jobs well, convenient access to higher education will become more important for personal success and the state's economic prosperity.

With the number of Illinois high school graduates projected to increase by over 12 percent during the next decade, it will be necessary to extend the benefits of education to larger numbers of students from more diverse cultures and ethnic backgrounds. If Illinois is unsuccessful in raising the educational attainment levels of its citizens, greater numbers will be consigned to poverty and sub-standard life styles.

*Educational Attainment, Income, and Unemployment*

| People 18 and over | Earnings | Unemployment |
|---|---|---|
| All | $25,852 | 5.5% |
| Less than 12 years of education | 13,697 | 11.6 |
| High school graduate | 20,248 | 6.1 |
| Some college, no degree | 20,728 | 5.2 |
| Associate's | 26,224 | 3.8 |
| Bachelor's | 37,224 | 2.8 |
| Advanced degree | 56,105 | 2.2 |
| Master's | 46,332 | - |
| Professional | 82,749 | - |
| Doctoral | 67,685 | - |

*Source: Current Population Survey, March 1995*

Economic well being is becoming more and more dependent upon higher levels of knowledge and skills. For the

last two decades, the disparity in earnings between college graduates and high school graduates has widened, and the gap continues to grow. Education beyond high school is becoming increasingly necessary in order to get a good job and maintain a comfortable standard of living.

The gap between the "haves" and "have-nots" is widening, with increasing numbers of well-educated, higher income individuals, as well as increasing numbers of poor; and declining middle income groups. Between 1975 and 1994, the incomes (adjusted for inflation) of high school graduates declined over 13 percent while the incomes of those who had a bachelor's degree increased almost seven percent, and advanced degree holders realized a 23 percent increase. The number of low-skilled, well-paying jobs, which in the past provided opportunities for the less educated to maintain an adequate standard of living, has declined and will continue to decline.

At the same time, the economy is becoming more global, technology-dependent, and driven by information resources rather than physical resources. Productivity and competitive advantage will increasingly depend upon employees with higher levels of knowledge and skills, and a workforce that is flexible and mobile in a dynamic business environment. A premium will be placed on acquiring, processing, evaluating, and using information to solve problems. The skills of this workforce will require constant renewal as the pace of change in virtually all industries accelerates.

The state's economic health depends in large measure on its ability to attract and retain the businesses and industries that will drive the new economy. These businesses and industries will be drawn to states that provide well-educated employees, and they will seek out states where they can benefit from significant, university-based research and development programs.

Social challenges—the aging of the population, the global environment, reconciling religious and political differences, and growing disparities in the distribution of wealth—are becoming more complex, rapidly evolving, and pervasive. These conditions place a high premium on individuals who are prepared to participate positively and effectively in their communities and the larger society.

Against this backdrop of challenges and opportunities, Illinois higher education will need to reinvent, as well as refine, its goals to best serve its students, the state and communities. Illinois higher education also will need to develop implementation strategies that capitalize upon technology, shared resources, new partnerships, improved productivity, and reinvestment in its highest priorities.

## III. A Citizens' Agenda for Higher Education in Illinois

If Illinois higher education is to pursue successfully an agenda that responds to the challenges and opportunities of the near future, it must have a well-conceived set of goals that are also shared by the citizens of the state, the Governor, and General Assembly, government and business leaders. The following goals are proposed:

- Increase the educational attainment of Illinois citizens
- Extend access to higher education
- Assure that college is affordable
- Enhance access and success for members of underrepresented groups
- Improve the quality of education
- Enhance responsiveness to students, employers, communities, and the state
- Strengthen school-college partnerships
- Improve productivity in Illinois colleges and universities

These goals have been derived by reviewing current Board policies, studying past successes, and reviewing state and national trends. They are designed to build upon the historical contributions and well-founded policy directions adopted by higher education, while at the same time adapting to the challenges and opportunities that the future holds for Illinois and its colleges and universities. Nevertheless, they will undergo substantial revision, as they are widely discussed and tested through surveys, focus groups, analyses, and conversations.

**Increase the Educational Attainment of Illinois Citizens**

*First and foremost, higher education will contribute to the well-being of individuals and the economic development of the state by raising educational attainment; thereby enabling Illinois citizens to acquire and continually update new skills and knowledge for personal and career advancement and enhancement of the communities in which they live and work.*

As Illinois citizens attain higher levels of education, they prosper economically and socially. They also make greater contributions to the state's communities and to the state's economy, as it becomes more and more dependent upon the creative use of knowledge and skills that enable individuals to be effective workers. To maximize both the personal and economic benefits of education, Illinois citizens will need to continue to upgrade their knowledge and skills throughout their lifetimes.

*Educational Attainment - Illinois' Rank among States in the Proportion of Population Holding Degrees*

| | 1990 | 1996 |
|---|---|---|
| High school graduates | 27 | 29 |
| Associate's degree | 21 | na |
| Bachelor's degree | 18 | 17 |
| Graduate degree | 15 | na |

*Source: 1990 Census, 1996 Current Population Survey*

Improving educational attainment will involve working in partnership with the state's businesses and elementary and secondary schools to improve basic skills and student performance. It also will be important to build upon student achievement at successive levels of education to raise the proportions of the state's population that holds associate, baccalaureate, and advanced degrees. We must also ensure that people can pursue the new knowledge and skills without encountering

unnecessary time, place, cost and program articulation constraints to further education and training.

**Extend Access to Higher Education**

*Higher education will expand opportunities for graduates of Illinois high schools, for adults seeking professional advancement or personal enrichment, and for individuals previously unserved.*

Within the next decade, Illinois high school graduates are projected to increase by over 12 percent. Many of these new high school graduates will have grown up in homes without the presence of one or both parents. In many cases, their parents will not have had a college education; and many new high school graduates will not be educationally or economically well prepared for college. People from widely diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds will need to be brought into the mainstream of educational opportunities. In addition, the global, technology-driven economy will demand that most people continuously update and upgrade their knowledge and skills.

Expanding access to higher education and maintaining choice among institutions and programs can be achieved by ensuring that students overcome financial, educational, and cultural barriers to being admitted to college. Geographical barriers also will have to be overcome by expanding the availability of courses and programs in rapidly growing areas of the state and by better articulating curricula across institutions. It is important for Illinois higher education to adopt a broader and longer-term view of access—that is, students should not only be able to enter college, they should have opportunities to succeed in pursuing their educational goals up to the levels of their ability. This means removing barriers beyond the "front door," in such areas as improving retention rates, supporting sound decisions about educational goals and careers, and requiring and sustaining high levels of student performance throughout their educational endeavors.

The environment for learning is changing--education will increasingly be made available where and when the student needs it, not where or when it is convenient to the school. Educational program capacity will continually need to be expanded and contracted and redistributed geographically to respond to shifting demographic patterns and needs of communities and regional economies. New learning formats, modes of instructional delivery, and instructional content must respond to the needs of individuals, employers, and communities. Higher Education will also need to take advantage of the opportunities provided by telecommunications and computer-based technologies to extend access.

The cost of adjusting to this changing environment, particularly in the purchase, training of personnel, maintenance, and use of telecommunications and computer-based technologies will be expensive. We will need the continuing strong support of state government and a cooperative, rather than a competitive, approach among institutions.

**Assure that College is Affordable**

*Higher education, in partnership with state and federal governments, will ensure that college is affordable through a combination of financial support for needy students and controlling price increases. No person who desires to pursue opportunities in higher education should be denied access of the basis of financial need.*

Many students and families are making great sacrifices to attain the benefits of a higher education, as the need for a college degree to secure a good job becomes more compelling. If larger numbers of low-income students seek a college education, as we hope they will, the difficulties faced by many students and families could become even more severe.

*Affordability of College in Illinois*

| | Total tuition, fees, room & board as percent of median household income | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1985 | 1996 |
| Community Colleges | 2.9 | 3.4 |
| Public Universities | 6.0 | 8.7 |
| Four-year Independent Institutions | 23.1 | 31.3 |

*Source: BHE Data*

Colleges and universities have an obligation to keep their educational charges in line with what students can afford, but they need adequate levels of state support, cost controls and incentives to do so. At the same time, students have a responsibility to prepare for college both academically and financially. Further, the state and institutions need to make an array of savings and financing options available to students.

**Enhance Access and Success for Members of Underrepresented Groups**

*Illinois higher education will strengthen its efforts to increase access for underrepresented students and also increase their chances to attain their educational objectives.*

The state's minority populations have been growing at a more rapid rate than its overall population and at an even greater rate in the younger age groups. In the coming decade, an increasing proportion of high school graduates will be minority, particularly Hispanic. Both Blacks and Hispanics have higher high school drop out rates than do other students. Lower percentages of minorities enroll in Illinois colleges and universities. Over the past decade participation rates of minorities have improved—since 1986, higher education degrees awarded to Blacks increased by almost 34 percent and to Hispanics by 109 percent. Increases in graduate and professional degrees awarded to minorities by Illinois colleges and universities were even larger. However, much more needs to be done so that minority students enroll and

*Public High School Graduates*

| | Percent | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1998 | 2008 |
| Black | 14.2 | 14.5 |
| Hispanic | 5.7 | 13.8 |
| Asian | 4.1 | 5.1 |
| All Others | 76.0 | 66.6 |

*Source:* WICHE, *Knocking at the College Door, 1998.*

succeed in higher education. In general, minority populations are not as well positioned as whites, economically or in terms of educational preparation, to pursue a postsecondary education. Further, the repudiation of affirmative action and parallel court decisions in a number of states do not bode well for sustaining the commitments and progress that have been made.

To achieve this goal, higher education and K-12 education must cooperate to improve students' preparation for further education. Colleges and universities will need to provide support programs early and throughout education. Efforts to recruit minority students and improve retention and completion rates must increase. Much can be accomplished by promoting a positive campus environment for minority students and continuing to increase the percentage of minority faculty and staff in Illinois higher education institutions.

**Improve the Quality of Education**

*Higher education will hold its students to even higher expectations, provide the assistance and support students need, assess attainment of these higher standards, and use assessment results to constantly improve curricula and instruction.*

The quality of education can be measured by the success of students and by the value that is added to their lives . Students are well prepared when they can build upon previous educational successes. Employers are demanding that basic communication, problem solving and analytical skills be emphasized and enhanced. Students also need to be better prepared for the demands of the modern workplace and to lead more productive and satisfying lives. They need to be better positioned to address the needs of their families and their communities in myriad ways—by contributing to their economic well-being, and by bringing insights to ethical and public policy debates. Learning to learn, and continuing to learn, will be ever more important in the years ahead.

As higher education uses technology to extend access and develops programs to meet emerging needs, new ways of maintaining and protecting the quality of instruction and the academic integrity of programs must be developed. The enduring value of the liberal arts and sciences must be protected and traditional, academic values, such as academic freedom, must be honored. An appropriate balance needs to be established between the fundamental academic core and workforce preparation, a balance that prepares students not only for their first jobs, but also for future jobs, and for their roles as citizens and life-long learners.

**Enhance Responsiveness to Students, Employers, Communities, and the State**

*Higher education will be responsive to the changing needs of students and employers through teaching, research, service, and timely, targeted and cost-effective programs. Workforce preparation, broadly defined, must become an even more important goal in the years ahead.*

Illinois higher education must be more responsive to its most important clients—its students and those who employ them after graduation. Students will need to have better information upon which to base their educational decisions. While expecting more from students and respecting the right of faculty to be the final arbiters of course content, institutions must monitor student satisfaction and continuously improve instruction, student services, advising, and course availability based on real student needs.

Institutions must also consistently monitor the needs of those who employ students. To provide students with state-of-the-art knowledge and skills that are relevant to the work place, collaboration with employers is needed. Higher education also needs to focus on the distinctive social, cultural and environmental needs of Illinois and its communities in such areas as health care, agriculture, and urban development to assure that changing needs are met.

To achieve this goal, higher education must become more "client-centered" and less "institution-centered." Colleges and universities will need to establish new partnerships with businesses, communities, and other postsecondary providers to share resources to ensure timely and cost-effective responses.

**Strengthen School-College Partnerships**

*Illinois higher education will work to strengthen partnerships with elementary and secondary education at the state and local levels.*

There is a strong mutual interest on the part of schools and colleges and universities in improving the educational preparation of students and ensuring that students can make smooth transitions between secondary and postsecondary education. The need for remedial courses is a symptom of the need to ensure better prepared students. This problem will not be solved effectively by independent policy actions at the postsecondary level that cannot address the root causes of poor academic preparation. Illinois colleges and universities share a joint responsibility with the state's elementary and secondary schools to improve the performance and success of students at all levels of education.

*Scope of Remedial Instruction in Illinois*

| | Community Colleges | Public Universities |
|---|---|---|
| Number of credit hours devoted to remedial instruction | 461,917 | 54,575 |
| % of all credit hours | 9.1% | 1.4% |
| Number of students needing remedial instruction | 82,938 | 11,278 |
| % of all undergraduates | 14.1% | 6.9% |

*Source:* IBHE, *The Scope and Effectiveness of Remedial/Developmental Education*, September 1997.

First and foremost, higher education must improve the preparation of teachers. This responsibility extends beyond colleges of education to colleges of arts and sciences

and to campus academic leadership. Colleges and universities need to partner with schools in offering academic enrichment and opportunities for acclimation to college life.

Since educational deficits accumulate early, assessment and intervention strategies need to be a key aspect of partnership efforts. At every level, students, teachers and parents need to know what is expected. As schools develop standards-based curricula and assessment programs, colleges and universities must ensure that courses articulate, and that admissions policies do not become a barrier to improvement. Ultimately, the success and payoff of K-16 partnerships will depend upon the commitment and support of leadership at all levels of education.

**Improve Productivity in Illinois Colleges and Universities**

*Higher education will continue to improve productivity and allocate its resources to its highest priorities.*

Illinois higher education has made major productivity improvements since the Board of Higher Education launched its PQP initiative in 1991. The Governor and General Assembly have acknowledged these achievements as they have fully supported the Board's budget recommendations in recent years.

It is important for higher education to continue its efforts to establish priorities and to improve quality and productivity—it would be unwise for higher education to believe that the resource gains resulting from a strong economy can be realized forever. Further, higher education's long-run contribution to the economic health and well-being of Illinois citizens is dependent upon an ability to improve productivity and reallocate resources from lower priorities to fund the higher priority goals it has established for the years ahead.

## IV. Implementing the Citizen's Agenda—Renewing the Commitment

In order to achieve these goals, Illinois higher education will need a shared commitment to these goals from Illinois citizens, the Governor, the General Assembly, and Illinois' diverse businesses and communities.

Illinois higher education can pursue these goals from a position of strength since it is widely recognized for the quality and diversity of its institutions and its commitment to aiding students. However, higher education will need to adapt to new challenges in some areas and recommit to historical strengths in others.

**Renewing Higher Education's Commitment**

Colleges and universities must become more "client-centered" and less "institution-centered," focusing on the needs of students and employers and on the needs of the state's citizens. Traditional education, as it improves its ability to compete with the rapidly growing proprietary sector and with "in-house" corporate institutions, will need to

seek out the opinions of its constituencies and continually update programs and adjust capacity. While avoiding "mission-creep", higher education also will need to broaden ideas about whom it serves to include, for example, secondary school students, those seeking GEDs, those in English-as-a-second-language programs, and nontraditional students of all ages and at all levels.

Higher education will need to capitalize upon telecommunications and computer-based technologies to meet the needs of new kinds of learners, to remove place and time barriers, to engage students in active and interactive learning experiences, and to enhance the productivity of learning from both the student's and institution's perspective. Although the emphasis on degrees will continue, program options need to be developed that are tailored to the emerging needs of students and employers.

Over the past several decades, many colleges and universities have gradually shifted their focus to graduate education and research even though their historical missions have been rooted in undergraduate instruction. Faculty reward systems have encouraged this shift as has their orientation to the priorities of their disciplines rather than the priorities of their institutions and the students and constituents they serve. This has not occurred uniformly across all types of institutions and is, of course, more appropriate for institutions that make major research contributions. The incentives and priorities underlying these shifts will need to be addressed if the citizens'agenda is to be successfully carried out. It is not a matter of mandating these changes. We must find ways to reward, support, and establish the conditions that make it in the best interests of faculties and of institutions to address these trends. Similarly, the conditions of faculty work and employment must not undermine higher education's goals. Fortunately, the directions of change will open new roles and organizational arrangements for faculty members within as well as external to their institutions, providing flexibility and exciting new opportunities.

Finally, higher education will need to move to an outcomes-oriented approach to accountability in which institutions are judged by the extent to which they contribute to a widely accepted public agenda for higher education.

**Renewing State Government's Commitment**

Illinois higher education is well positioned to achieve new goals and to deal with forces emerging at the state and national levels. The priority placed on higher education and public confidence in its quality and productivity has been clearly evidenced in the state's support during the last decade. In the last decade, Illinois higher education received appropriation increases of 70 percent, which is 26 percentage points above the national average, even as enrollments remained relatively stable. During this time, however, demands on state resources from other sectors—human services, corrections, Medicaid, elementary and secondary schools—have increased substantially. Higher education's share of state resources has gradually slipped from around 18 percent in 1970 to around 11 percent in 1998.

Education is clearly the key to future prosperity for Illinois citizens, businesses, and communities. Now is the time to prepare for the challenges and opportunities the future will bring—technology, electronic commerce, globalization, and the changing needs and characteristics of the population—so that Illinois can enhance its position in the world economy. Higher education will do everything within its power to achieve the goals outlined in this citizens' agenda. It will continue to refine its priorities, improve quality, and increase productivity. The Governor and General Assembly will also need to renew their commitment to higher education to maintain the state's investment in a better future for the citizens of Illinois.

**Recommendation**

The staff recommends adoption of the following resolution:

*The Board of Higher Education hereby endorses the plan for developing a Citizens' Agenda for Illinois Higher Education and the general goals and directions reflected in this plan.*